One Snowshoe presents

Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai

by Tajima Rettou

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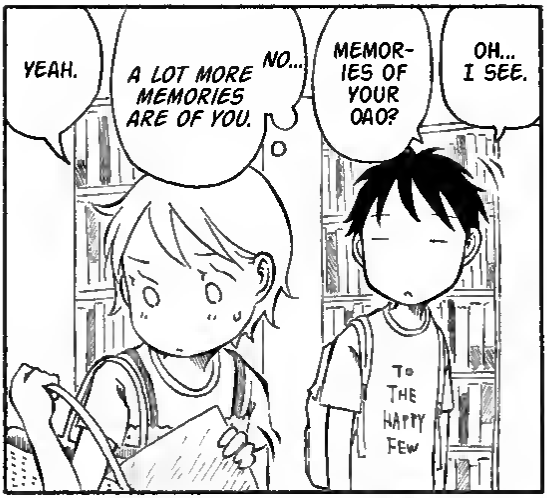
Prepared by vhirx and Baem
onesnowshoe.tumblr.com

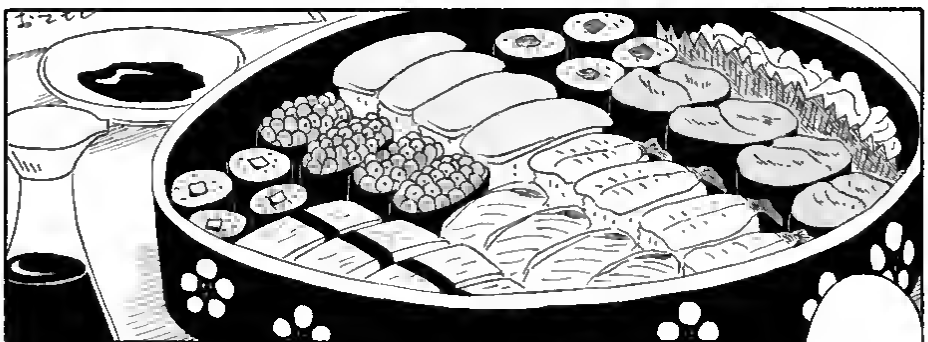
20.
CHILDREN GROW UP BY UNDERSTANDING

精肉 スタミナ王
福引会場
TO THE HAPPY FEW

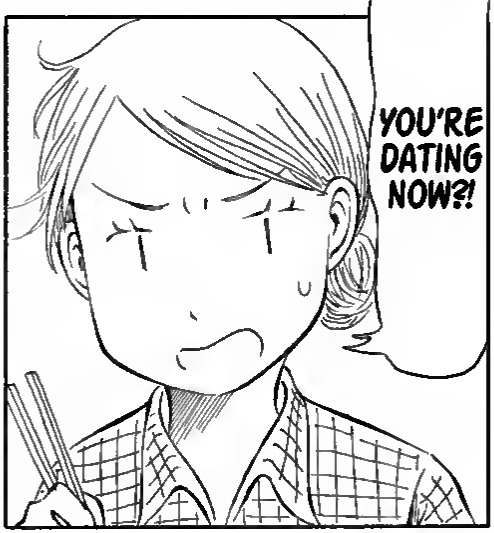
I SAID THAT YOU COULD KEEP IT!
Harimoto Used Books
WHO THE HELL WOULD WANT SOMETHING LIKE THIS?!
EMUSHI BEACH
ズバーン
WELL, I OON'T WANT IT EITHER!
YEAH... BUT I OON'T WANT IT.
ぐい
ぐい
THE GODDESS OF GARBAGE HATH ARRIVED!!
IN THAT CASE, WOULD YOU MIND IF I TOOK IT?
Oh...
.....


YEAH.
A LOT MORE MEMORIES ARE OF YOU.
NO...
MEMORIES OF YOUR OAO?
OH... I SEE.
TO THE HAPPY FEW

I MAOE SOME GOOD MEMORIES THERE.
EH? YOU WANT THAT THING?
TO THE HAPPY

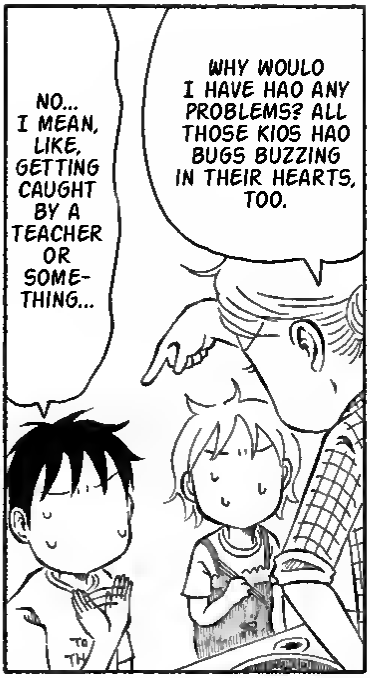


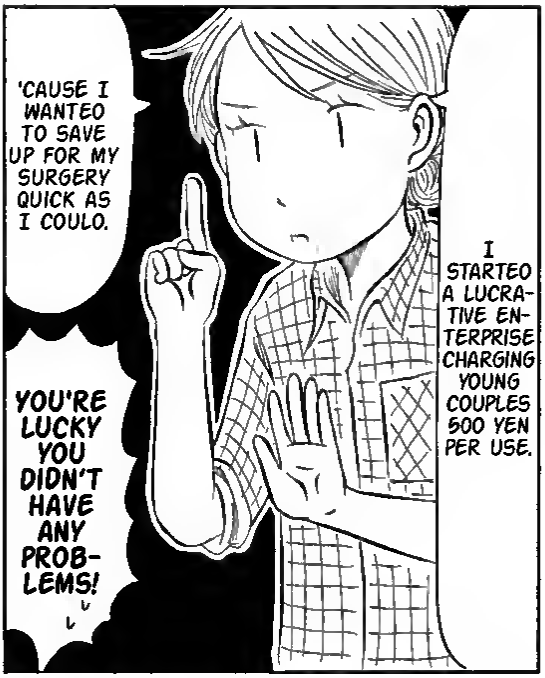
.....
AH-HA. WELL, AIN'T THAT JUST PEACHY?
TO THE HAPPY FEW

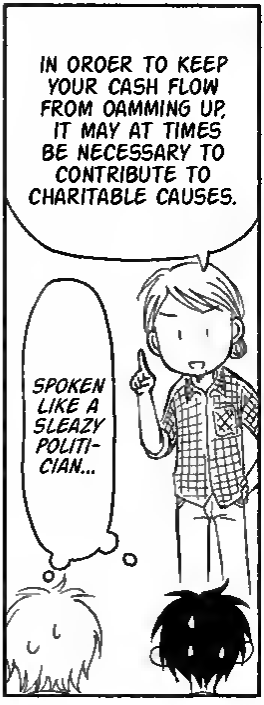

YOU'RE DATING NOW?!

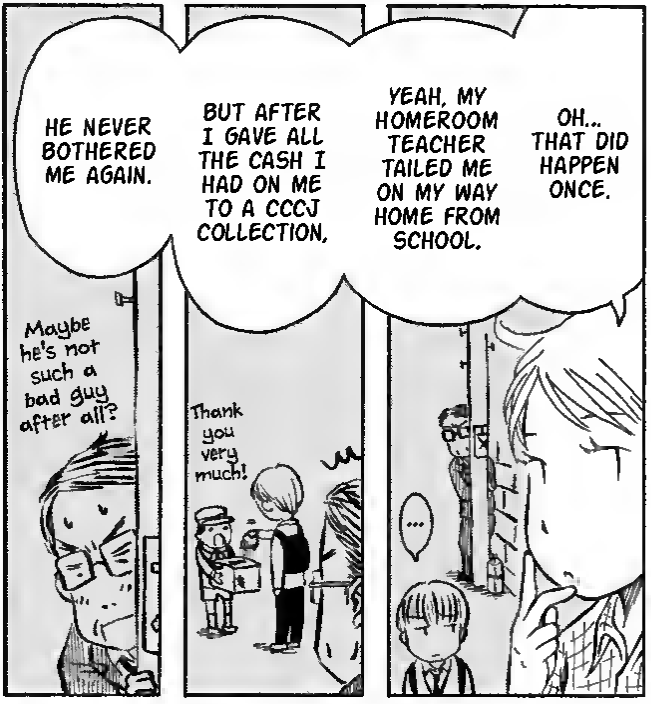
LISTEN UP, SHOU-CHAN.
IF I FIND OUT YOU'RE ENGAGING IN SOME SORDID HIGH SCHOOL LOVE AFFAIR,
I'LL CUT YOUR NUTS OFF.
YUM!
!
LIKE WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
MINE WEREN'T JUST CUT OFF. I HAD THEM CUT OFF. SEE?
HMM?
AH!! MINAMI-CHAN TOOK TWO PIECES OF TORO!!
EHH?!
ウマーン
トローン
SHE'S GOT SUCH A HAPPY LOOK ON HER FACE...
CRAP. SHE'S JUST TOO CUTE. DAMN IT.
YOU'RE DONE FOR, BUDDY. YOU'VE GOT BUGS HATCHING IN YOUR HEART.
.....
Your opinion may differ.

YEAH.
FOR THE ROOF?
TO THE
SHOU-CHAN, STILL HAVE THAT KEY I GAVE YOU?
...OH YEAH.
ビ
JUST GIVE ME THE DAMN THING!!
WHY?!
I WANT IT BACK.
ME?
AND WHAT ON EARTH DID YOU EVEN USE IT FOR ANYWAY?
WHY THE HECK NOT?!
BACK WHEN I GAVE IT TO YOU, I NEVER IMAGINED YOU'D ACTUALLY FIND YOURSELF A GIRLFRIEND.
PHEW. MAN...
TO THE HAPPY FEW


NO... I MEAN, LIKE, GETTING CAUGHT BY A TEACHER OR SOME-THING...
WHY WOULD I HAVE HAD ANY PROBLEMS? ALL THOSE KIDS HAD BUGS BUZZING IN THEIR HEARTS, TOO.

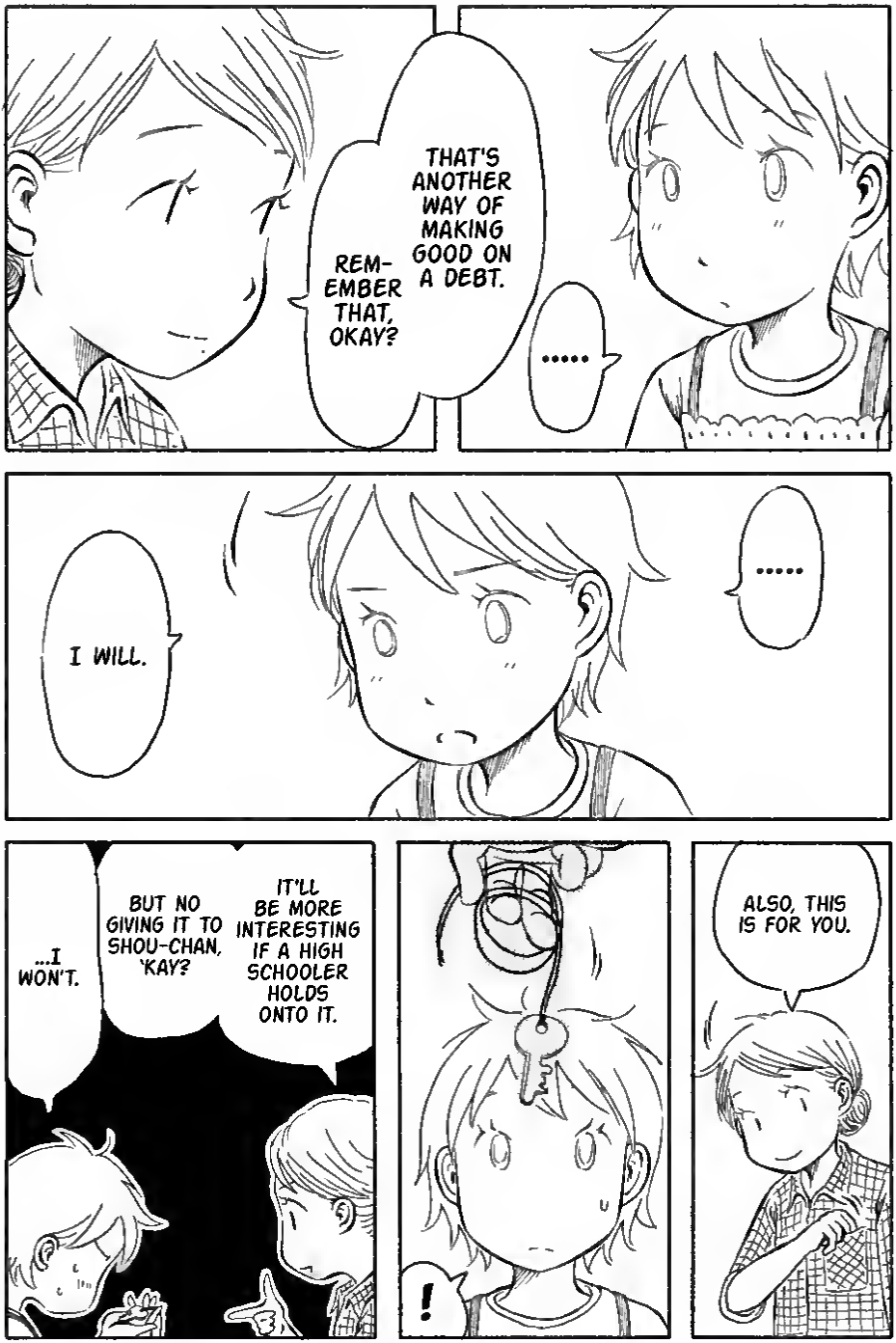

I STARTED A LUCRA-TIVE EN-TERPRISE CHARGING YOUNG COUPLES 500 YEN PER USE.
'CAUSE I WANTED TO SAVE UP FOR MY SURGERY QUICK AS I COULD.
YOU'RE LUCKY YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY PROB-LEMS!

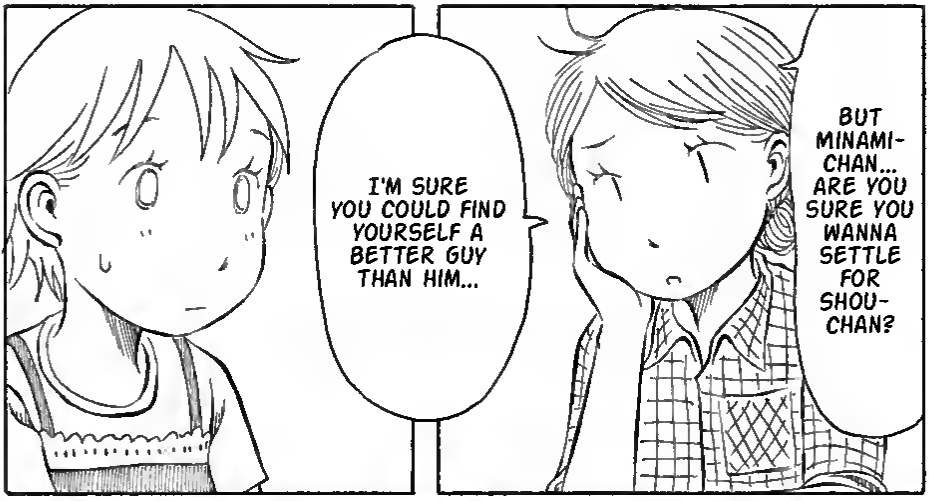

IN ORDER TO KEEP YOUR CASH FLOW FROM JAMMING UP, IT MAY AT TIMES BE NECESSARY TO CONTRIBUTE TO CHARITABLE CAUSES.
SPOKEN LIKE A SLEAZY POLITI-CIAN...

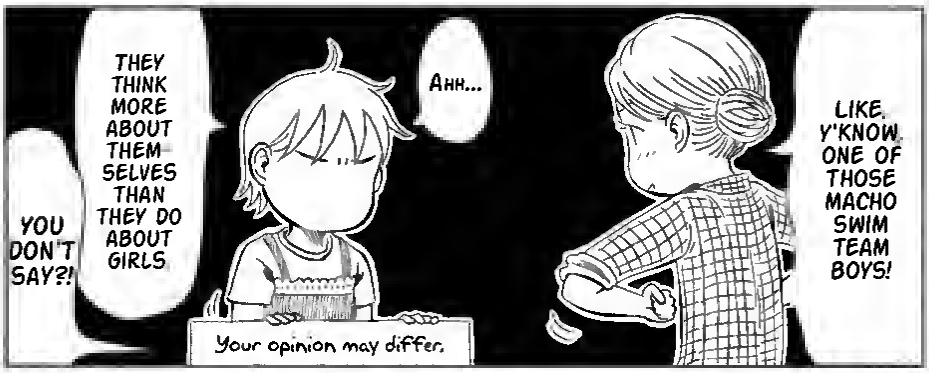

HE NEVER BOTHERED ME AGAIN.
BUT AFTER I GAVE ALL THE CASH I HAD ON ME TO A CCCJ COLLECTION,
YEAH, MY HOMEROOM TEACHER TAILED ME ON MY WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL.
OH... THAT DID HAPPEN ONCE.
Maybe he's not such a bad guy after all?
Thank you very much!
...

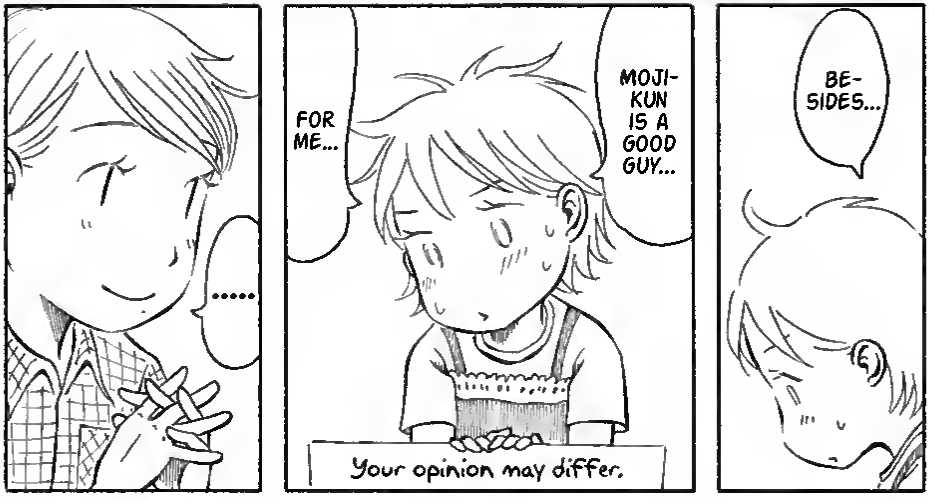
.....
HERE YOU GO.
A COUPLE OF RAFFLE TICKETS.
WELL, I GUESS I SHOULD GIVE YOU SOME-THING IN PLACE OF THAT KEY.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'LL WIN ANYTHING.
.....
TO THE HAPPY FEW
EH, I'M OFF TO GET RID OF THESE THINGS.
.....
HMM?
UMM... AKI-SAN?

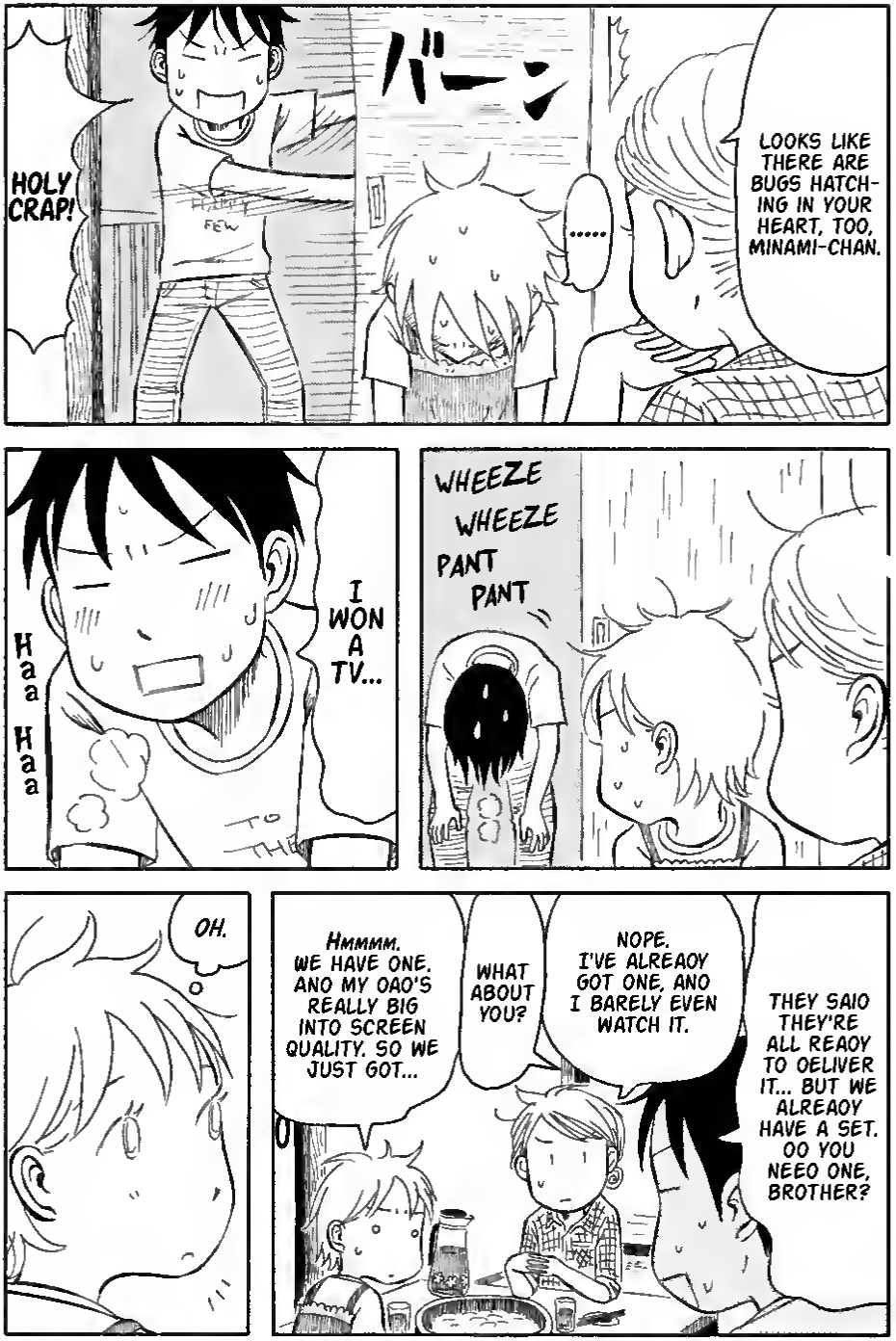
.....
BUT... DOING IT FOR FREE IS JUST...
YEP. I MEAN, I DID SAY I'D LET YA WORK IT OFF, RIGHT?
ABOUT THE MONEY... IS IT REALLY OKAY THIS WAY?
THEN, WHY DON'T WE DO THIS?
WHEN YOU BECOME AN ADULT, MINAMI-CHAN,
DO WHAT I DID AND USE THAT MONEY TO HELP OUT SOMEONE YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE.


THAT'S ANOTHER WAY OF MAKING GOOD ON A DEBT.
REM-EMBER THAT, OKAY?
.....
.....
I WILL.
...I WON'T.
BUT NO GIVING IT TO SHOU-CHAN, 'KAY?
IT'LL BE MORE INTERESTING IF A HIGH SCHOOLER HOLDS ONTO IT.
!
ALSO, THIS IS FOR YOU.

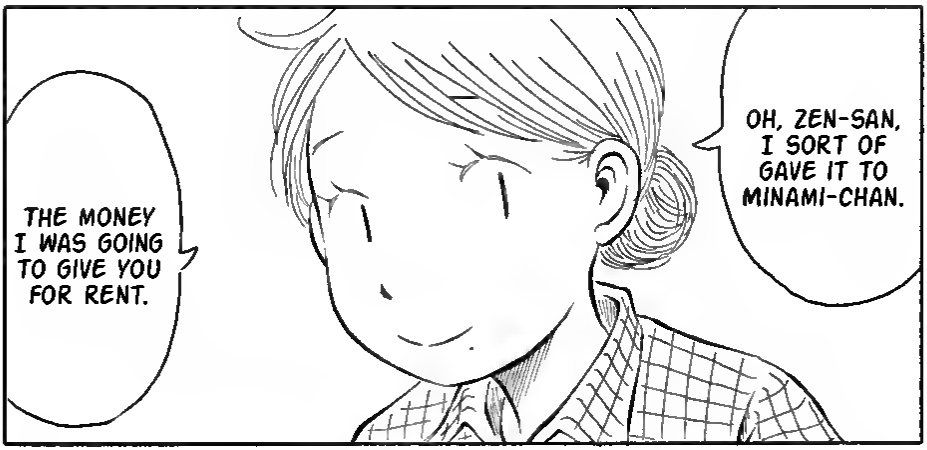

I'M SURE YOU COULD FIND YOURSELF A BETTER GUY THAN HIM...
BUT MINAMI-CHAN... ARE YOU SURE YOU WANNA SETTLE FOR SHOU-CHAN?

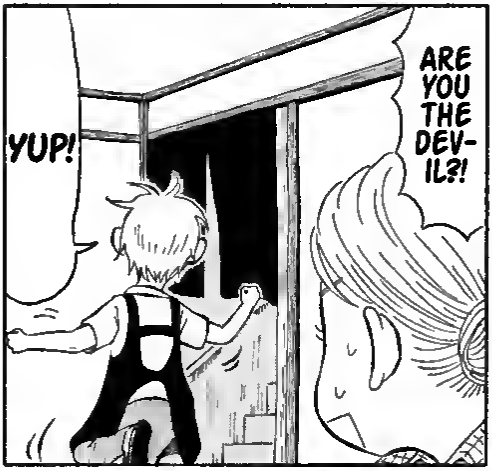

YOU DON'T SAY?!
THEY THINK MORE ABOUT THEM-SELVES THAN THEY DO ABOUT GIRLS
Ahh...
Your opinion may differ.
LIKE, Y'KNOW, ONE OF THOSE MACHO SWIM TEAM BOYS!

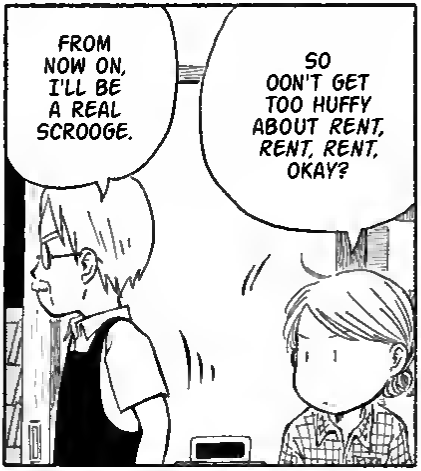

.....
FOR ME...
MOJI-KUN IS A GOOD GUY...
Your opinion may differ.
BE-SIDES...


バーン
HOLY CRAP!
.....
LOOKS LIKE THERE ARE BUGS HATCHING IN YOUR HEART, TOO, MINAMI-CHAN.
Haa Haa
I WON A TV...
WHEEZE WHEEZE PANT PANT
OH.
Hmmmm. WE HAVE ONE, AND MY DAD'S REALLY BIG INTO SCREEN QUALITY. SO WE JUST GOT...
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
NOPE. I'VE ALREADY GOT ONE, AND I BARELY EVEN WATCH IT.
THEY SAID THEY'RE ALL READY TO DELIVER IT... BUT WE ALREADY HAVE A SET. DO YOU NEED ONE, BROTHER?

SNAP
EX-CEL-LENT!
MOJI-KUN, MIND IF I TAKE THAT TV?
SURE?
?
I JUST HAD A GREAT IDEA!
バタバタバタ
HE SAID HE JUST WON A TV.
?
WHAT ARE THOSE TWO UP TO?
バタバタバタ
Mmm, OKAY.
THANK YOU KINDLY.
ZEN-SAN, I'LL WATCH THE SHOP. GO GRAB A BITE OF LUNCH. THERE'S SUSHI UP THERE.

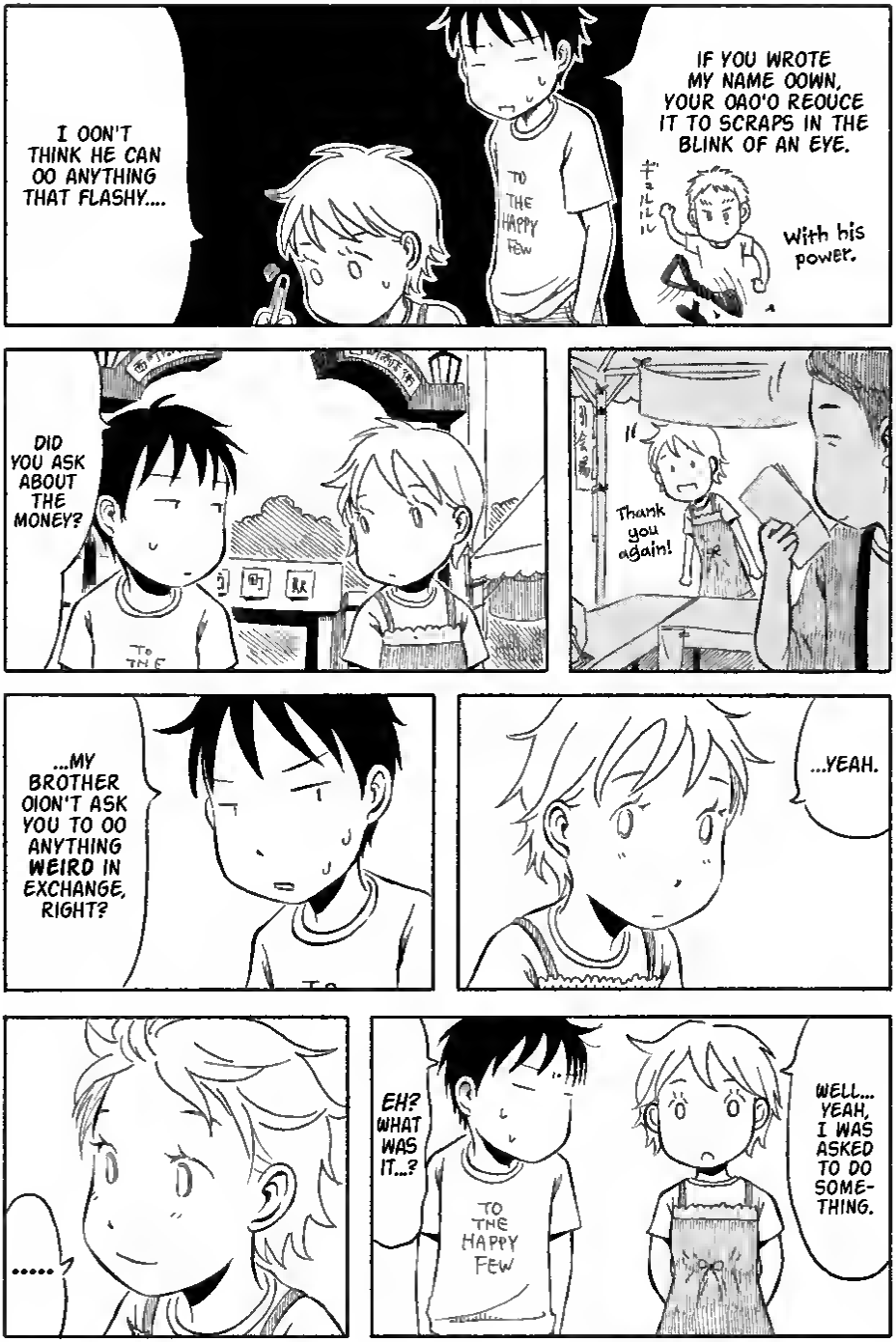

OH, ZEN-SAN, I SORT OF GAVE IT TO MINAMI-CHAN.
THE MONEY I WAS GOING TO GIVE YOU FOR RENT.


ARE YOU THE DEV-IL?!
YUP!


SO DON'T GET TOO HUFFY ABOUT RENT, RENT, RENT, OKAY?
FROM NOW ON, I'LL BE A REAL SCROOGE.

SINCE PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME CAN'T LEAVE CHILDREN BEHIND.
I'D LIKE SOMETHING IN THIS WORLD TO BIND US TOGETHER. AKI-CHAN.

ZEN-SAN,
I'M SOR-RY.
NOTH-ING YOU NEED TO APO-LOG-IZE FOR.
NO, SEE, THERE IS.
'CAUSE THERE'S NO MORE TORO.
WHAT?!
西町商店
Waragai Tom
.....
SHOULD I TELL HIM THAT YOU WON IT?
BETTER NOT...
TO THE HAPPY FEW


I OON'T THINK HE CAN OO ANYTHING THAT FLASHY....
TO THE HAPPY FEW
IF YOU WROTE MY NAME OOWN, YOUR OAO'O REOUCE IT TO SCRAPS IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.
ギュルルル
With his power.
DID YOU ASK ABOUT THE MONEY?
Thank you again!
...MY BROTHER OION'T ASK YOU TO OO ANYTHING WEIRD IN EXCHANGE, RIGHT?
...YEAH.
.....
EH? WHAT WAS IT...?
TO THE HAPPY FEW
WELL... YEAH, I WAS ASKED TO DO SOME-THING.

SOMETHING REALLY EXCITING!
TO THE HAPPY FEW
薬局
アヤムラ

TRANSLATION NOTES:

Page 170:
(1) Toro refers specifically to sushi prepared from the fatty bellies of Bluefin tuna. It's succulent, delicious, increasingly expensive, and prone to poaching at sushi parties by unscrupulous friends and relatives.
(2) "Bugs hatching in your heart" is a literal translation of the Japanese saying. A Western approximation might be, "blinders on," "over the moon," or similar. The original Japanese was retained here for flavor.

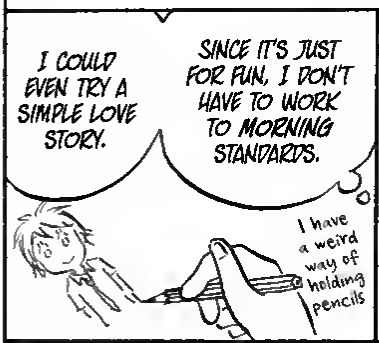
Page 172: The CCCJ is the acronym for the Red Feather Community Chest of Japan (赤い羽根共同募金). The largest national charity in Japan, it operates similarly to the United Way of North America.

Page 179: The "*Are you the devil?!*" line is a deliberate mistranslation here. The original line reads "Is this endless hell?! (無限地獄?!)," which is hilarious in Japanese in part because of the brevity of its kanji construction. The improvised line here retains the hellish element but also delivers something much more colloquial and easily understandable in English.

AFTERWORD

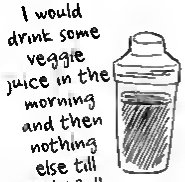
I HADN'T DRAFTED ANYTHING MANGA RELATED IN A YEAR. THE THOUGHT CAME TO MIND OF TRYING MY HAND AT A LONGER STORY (...OR RATHER SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF A LONG-ISH SHORT STORY) FOR MY OWN ENJOYMENT.

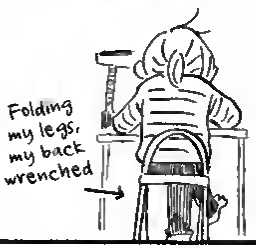
AS THE FALL OF 2013 COMMENCED, I RETURNED TO TOKYO AFTER SPENDING A YEAR IN MY HOMETOWN ATTENDING TO SOME FAMILY MATTERS.


I COULD EVEN TRY A SIMPLE LOVE STORY.
SINCE IT'S JUST FOR FUN, I DON'T HAVE TO WORK TO MORNING STANDARDS.
I have a weird way of holding pencils

I HAVE A FEELING THE WORDS "FOR FUN" MAY CAUSE SOME INDIGNATION, BUT I FACED ALL MANNER OF DIFFICULTIES IF I HADN'T TOLD MYSELF TIME AND AGAIN, "YOU'RE DOING THIS FOR FUN," I WOULDN'T HAVE WRITTEN ANYTHING.

EATING BUT ONCE A DAY, I LOST 10 KG DURING THAT PERIOD.





I HOLED MYSELF UP FOR TWO MONTHS AND DRAFTED ALL 20 CHAPTERS.

AROUND THE TIME I FINISHED CHAPTER 18, MY EDITOR S-SAN CALLED ME OUT OF THE BLUE. HE ASKED ME TO SHOW HIM EVERYTHING ONCE IT WAS DONE.

I WAS AFRAID THAT IF I MET UP WITH A FRIEND WHO ASKED ME ABOUT MANGA, MY HEART WOULD BREAK OR THE STORY WOULD SIMPLY SHRIVEL UP AND DIE ON ME. (THAT'S HAPPENED BEFORE.) (SORRY FOR BEING SUCH A PAIN IN THE NECK, FRIENDS.)

OTHER THAN A HOLIDAY WEEKEND IN MY HOMETOWN, I BARELY SAW A SOUL.

AND THEY DECIDED TO SERIALIZE IT.

And my country bumpkin parents fed me an unconscionable amount of yummy sushi.

NYAAH

GRRR

GRR

The family cat. Really, really angry.

Crazy huge

A WEEK AFTER I SHOWED HIM MY DRAFTS, A WHITE FOX APPEARED IN MY DREAMS

LET'S SHOW THIS TO THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF!

Draft

I COULD **DIE** FROM HOW BITTER-SWEET THIS IS!

JUST DRAW WHATEVER YOU'D LIKE TO DRAW.

MY EDITOR S-SAN SAID,

HOWEVER, I HAD NO IDEA WHATSOEVER OF WHAT I SHOULD DRAW FOR THE FRONTISPIECE ON PAGE TWO.

It's all thanks to you, XXtsuka-san!

THE MANUSCRIPT FOR CHAPTER ONE WAS THE FIRST I EVER TURNED IN WITH COLOR PAGES. BUT THANKS TO HELPING WITH MY FRIEND'S PUBLIC INSTALLATION, I WAS ACCUSTOMED TO WORKING WITH COLOR.

(IN MY CASE, IF I'M NOT DRAWING WITH THE INTENTION OF GIFTING THE RESULT TO SOMEONE, I CANNOT DRAW WELL AT ALL.)

It's a snail.

It's a snail.

It was crawling on a vase on our family altar.

SO I DECIDED TO DRAW SOMETHING THAT I COULD GIVE TO MY BROTHER'S KID (A GIRL TWO YEARS OLD AT THE TIME).

AT ANY RATE, THE SPEED AT WHICH I COMPLETED MY SKETCHES QUICKLY GOT SLOWER AND SLOWER.

Ugh...

I SPENT ABOUT 10 TO 14 DAYS PER CHAPTER. THE MORE I DREW, THE MORE I WAS AFFLICTED WITH THE MYSTERIOUS SENSATION THAT THE QUALITY OF MY DRAWING WAS DETERIORATING.

Thoroughly convinced

MY EDITOR S-SAN SENT ME AN EMAIL WITH THE QUOTATION, "WHEN YOUR ART CAUSES YOU PAIN, YOUR ART IMPROVES." (APPARENTLY A QUOTATION FROM YUKI MASAMI'S TWITTER FEED.)

THIS BLACK SNOWMAN DISSOLVES WHEN I TAKE A BATH.

Ahh...

ARGH! ARGH! AGH!

MWA HAH HAH

WHEN I CAN'T DRAW WELL, MY HEAD FILLS WITH TRIVIALITIES. MY PARENTS AND FRIENDS USED TO SAY THAT THEY FORMED A BLACK, EVIL SNOWMAN.

The recklessness of someone who glimpses the light at the end of the tunnel.

AS I NEARED THE END, I AT LAST LEARNED, "IF YOU SLEEP, YOU'LL SUCK!" (AFTER DRAWING A CERTAIN NUMBER OF PAGES, YOU'LL GET WARMED UP, AND YOUR PACE WILL INCREASE. BUT WAKING UP THE NEXT MORNING, IT WILL HAVE REVERTED TO NORMAL.) AND WITH THE FERVOR OF KATSU-SHIN'S, *"I SHALL NEVER WEAR UNDERPANTS AGAIN!"* I PROCLAIMED, "I WILL NOT SLEEP!"

A dream wherein the snow that sits atop the mountain in reality

Had become vacuous cavities like this

I HAD A DREAM ABOUT MOUNT FUJI. (A GOOD OMEN.)

Finally visited a barber.

Sleeping mask

AFTER SUBMITTING THE MANUSCRIPT FOR THE FINAL CHAPTER, I SPENT ABOUT THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS SLEEPING.

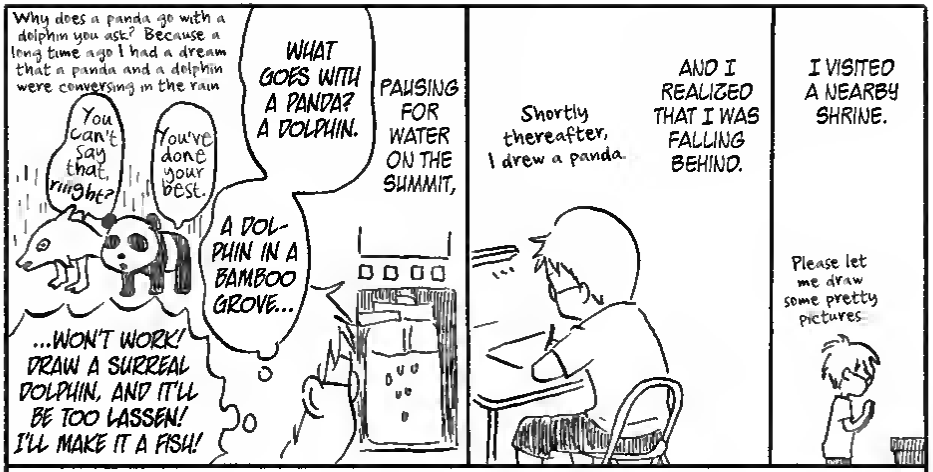
I KNOW, RIGHT?!

LOOKING AT THIS, PEOPLE MIGHT THINK IT'S A DINOSAUR MANGA...

But he did say they were nice drawings.

I don't particularly care much for dinosaurs, but I sometimes do like to experience the singular agony of drawing something I've never drawn before

WHEN I MET WITH THE DESIGN TEAM TO DISCUSS THE LAYOUT OF THE VOLUME COVER, THEY URGED ME TO DRAW, *"DINOSAURS! DINOSAURS!"* SO I DREW SOME DINOSAURS.


Why does a panda go with a dolphin you ask? Because a long time ago I had a dream that a panda and a dolphin were conversing in the rain
You can't say that, right?
You've done your best.
WHAT GOES WITH A PANDA? A DOLPHIN.
A DOLPHIN IN A BAMBOO GROVE...
...WON'T WORK! DRAW A SURREAL DOLPHIN, AND IT'LL BE TOO LASSEN! I'LL MAKE IT A FISH!
PAUSING FOR WATER ON THE SUMMIT,
Shortly thereafter, I drew a panda.
AND I REALIZED THAT I WAS FALLING BEHIND.
I VISITED A NEARBY SHRINE.
Please let me draw some pretty pictures

I HOPE THAT WE CAN MEET AGAIN SOMETIME. I WILL WALK THE DAYS UNTIL THEN HUMBLY AND DILIGENTLY.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ACCOMPANYING ME ON THIS JOURNEY.

Tajima Rettou

INTERVIEW

This interview was conducted in 2014 Japanese for the website Kono Manga ga Sugoi! with Tajima Rettou and an editor. It was pasted in two halves, which can be read in their entirety in Japanese at http://konomanga.jp/interview/20121-2 and http://konomanga.jp/interview/20177-2.

Question. *The manga Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai placed third in the Kono Manga ga Sugoi! 2015 rankings and claimed the top spot in the monthly November rankings. There aren't many mangaka around attracting this kind of attention. I'm sure that many of our readers are wondering what kind of an author you are. Please tell us a bit about your experience on the scene thus far.*

Tajima My first-ever one-shot was called "Goaisatsu." It won the Sadayasu Kei (newcomer award) at the 24th Manga Open in 2008.

Editor Actually, a one shot about the homeless population called "Black Tiger" by Okada Sakumo (whose current work *Oni Shine* is presently published in Shogakukan's *Big Comic Superior*) won the grand prize at the Manga Open. Normally, only the winner of the grand prize is published in *Morning*. But the editing department pulled our heads together and said, "Both of them are terrific!" Thus, we ended up publishing "Goaisatsu" in *Morning* as well.

Q *Why did you choose to submit your one-shot to Morning?*

T Actually, I first thought I'd submit it to *Big Comic Spirits*.

Ed Heh.

T But when I had finished drawing it and was ready to submit, I checked *Spirits*' entry article and couldn't find any precise submission criteria. *Morning* was sitting right next to it. I took a glance at it, saw the criteria, and thought, "Yeah, this one." Heh. I read both, of course.

Ed Now that I hear that story, I must admit that I actually wrote that article. Ever since Kinoshita-sensei's "Poten Seikatsu" won the grand prize and was serialized immediately thereafter, I've used cuts from "Poten Seikatsu" to create those articles.

Q *What a fateful encounter. Is Morning the only serialization you have contributed to?*

T Let's see. I studied film and media in college, but I did put together a little 4-koma thing. I guess that's it?

Ed I did have a look at that. They were little doodles of everyday happenings a bit like a journal. About 60 days worth of of little meditations like, "It bleeds through on Japanese washi paper. So I changed the paper I was using." You can get a sense of how these feel in the afterword contained in the second volume of *Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai*.

T Back then, it was my first time even putting pen to paper.

Q *Now I really want to read it!*

T My friends' names are all over the place, so it's unfortunately something we can't really publish. (Heh.) Then after I graduated college, I was working some part-time jobs and just enjoying myself. I was pretty loose with with my money, and I thought things could just continue as they were. I didn't really feel like drawing.

Q *Oh dear. (Heh.)*

T But then one of my paychecks didn't arrive on time, and I realized that you can't place much trust in society. I started saving money. And when I had saved some up, I quit my part-time job, decided to have some fun, and then thought, "Hey, why I don't I draw a manga?" So my reason for wanting money... No, that's not quite right.

Q *And then "Goaisatsu" won the prize?*

T Yes. And after that, "The Bureaucrat's Love Affair."

INTERVIEW

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Q *That was published in 2010. And then the "Tajima Rettou tour" began in 2014. In January and February you published "Oppai Arigatou," "Okane no Aru Fukei," and "Johnny Boy's Spring" in Morning. And Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai started in March. What a refreshing tour.*

T I'd actually come up with the first draft of "Oppai Arigatou" four years earlier. I showed them to my editor before the Tohoku earthquake of 2011 and delivered the full version thereafter.

Ed Our business is all about asset acquisition.

Q *Because editing departments like yours always keep a plentiful stock of such assets on hand, correct? And depending on the timing, you can always give the go sign for publishing, right?*

Ed Exactly. I thought we might as well publish it right away. But the editor-in-chief wanted to wait until several works had been stockpiled.

Q *But it did take some time for that stockpile to accumulate. Were you worried about what to write?*

T Nope. I was a bit busy with work. Heh.

Q *Life for a mangaka until their formal debut is pretty tough, isn't it? Even if you deliver a product ready for serialization, you still can't be sure that it'll earn any money. In your afterword for the manga, you wrote of family circumstances that led you to return to your hometown for about a year.*

T I was relatively free while living at my parents' house and used that time to bring my drafts to release level. After I returned to Tokyo, I began working on the drafts for *Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai* in the fall of 2013.

Q *So Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai is your first lengthy project. Did you plan it to be 20 installments from the very start?*

T No. At first, I thought I could wrap it all up in one volume and 10 chapters. But by the seventh chapter, I realized that just wouldn't be possible.

Ed In the seventh chapter, the world of the story was still expanding.

T Even by chapter 15, it still felt like I'd never be able to fit everything in. So I decided to cut it off at a good place.

Q *I'd like to pose this question to your editor. Did you have any clue that Tajima-sensei was writing a lengthier work?*

Ed None at all. When I called Tajima-sensei to catch up and was told, "Hey, I'm working on something longer," I was shocked. Everything else had been quite short, so I found myself intrigued. But donning my editor's hat, when a writer tells me, "Hey, I'm working on something longer," I usually expect they're on their second chapter. "The arc of the story will go like this. Chapter one will go like this." So I asked Tajima-sensei, "What page are you on?"

T And I said, "287." Heh.

Ed And I thought, "What did you did you just say?!" Heh. But I thought about it a little bit. It sounded a bit like the volumes Osamu Tezuka used to release back in the day. As I mulled that over, I realized, "No, that can't be right." And I asked, "What chapter are you on now?" "Chapter 18." "Then each chapter would be about 16 to 19 pages."

Q *That's quite a sensible number of pages.*

Ed Since the whole thing would run to 20 chapters and the end was in sight, I said, "Please call me once you're finished."

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Q *I fear this may be a rude question, but why did you decide to draw 20 chapters worth of drafts all at once?*

T I had never written a longer work before for fun. After I won my award, I had been told to develop a draft for something that could be serialized, but I just couldn't come up with anything. So I told myself, "I'm doing this for fun!" and started drawing as though it were all for practice.

Q Then I imagine there must have been aspects that felt a bit easier for you, too.

T Yes, indeed. Because I didn't have to shown anyone what I was doing, when I would visit a bookstore, I would see the stacks of manga volumes and think, "No matter what I write, someone will be upset." But I admonished myself and grew defiant, saying, "Since you're writing for fun, it's not like you have to show anyone. You don't have to clash with anyone!" And thus, I set myself at ease as I drew.

Q *But as you were reaching your 20th chapter, didn't you feel like showing your work to someone?*

T Well, when I spoke with my editor, all I said was, "Right now, I'm working on something longer."

Q *How long did it take you to develop the drafts for all 20 chapters?*

T About two months in total.

Q *When you received those 20 chapters, how were they?*

Ed They were like this.

Q *Wow! They're tiny! (Heh.)*

Ed Before, Tajima-sensei had drawn on normal sized paper (2 pages per sheet of B4.) So I was frankly rather bewildered. The characters were so small that it took me some time to even read them. Heh. But the more I read, the more I was pulled into the story. Tajima-sensei handed me the drafts at a cafe, and I spent four hours there reading straight through. When I was done, I told Tajima-sensei, "This is awesome. I do believe we can publish this."

The original rough drafts.

Q *You believed it could be published even then?*

Ed Indeed. But I did have one worry. Since it was drawn at such small scale, it seemed as though there was too much text. But on a normal-sized manga page, there would be more surface area. So I thought it might just be okay. When I brought it back to the editing department, the editor-in-chief, too, exclaimed, "This is awesome! Let's get going!"

A comparison of the draft and the final page.

Q *So the drafts proceeded to final form almost unchanged?*

T There were a few changes. The configuration of some panels. How some art works. But mostly unchanged. Yes.

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Q *Thus the "Tajima Rettou Tour" of three short stories ensued, and Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai's serialization commenced*

Ed That's right. But before that, in December of 2013, we published "Goaisatsu" on our app. There were a good number of people who enjoyed it. Its popularity gave us the final push to launch the "Tajima Rettou Tour" and serialization of *Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai*

Q *"Oppai Arigatou" was quite eccentric, to the point where I wondered how you ever came up with it. But you didn't make it a point to write particularly eccentrically, did you?*

T Let's see. Thinking back on it, I guess I just drew it as it came to me

Ed As the "Tajima Rettou Tour" was quite well received, we were pretty convinced that *Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai* could be a success

T But they still told me that if it weren't popular enough, it might still end somewhere in the middle.

Q *This might be a bit of an underhanded question, but even though you had drafts for 20 chapters, that still wasn't a guarantee you'd publish all 20, right?*

Ed If it had remained unpopular, we probably would have ended it partway through. That's just the nature of the manga business

Q *Once publication started, how did your readers react?*

Ed Many readers of *Morning* are working adults, so there was some worry as to whether a high school love story would hold their interest. So we tried to liven up the teaser text and create as fun an atmosphere around the manga as possible. Anyway we were pretty sure that if they gave it a chance and read it, they'd likely enjoy it. When we lifted the proverbial lid, the response to the first chapter was quite strong.

T Even though nothing happened in that chapter

Ed Well, it introduced the main characters, right? As though it was saying, "Something will happen with these two"

Q *What was your most trying time during serialization?*

T Chapter 12

Q *What a quick reply! Was there a problem with the original draft?*

T No. With the manuscript (final draft). As I wrote in the afterword, I was having a hard time with my art. "What I should do here?" I didn't like how my drawings looked, and screams of, "You suck!" reverberated within my head

Q *So you were at an impasse*

Ed From my perspective when I looked at the manuscript proofs, I thought the line art was really coming along. The characters' faces were becoming more expressive. But Tajima-sensei kept on saying, "Aren't I getting worse?"

Q *I guess only you would know. Was there a particular issue on your mind?*

T No. Something was just getting under my skin

Ed When we began serialization, we had seven chapters worth of manuscripts already in reserve, and each individual chapter was taking about 10 days to work on. However, that lengthened to about two weeks. Given that *Morning* is a weekly magazine, meaning that we distribute a chapter each and every week, we were all getting a bit nervous. Heh.

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Q *So you were quickly exhausting your buffer. From the perspective of a layman, I might think that as you drew, you might get used to the process, thus getting faster. Was this not the case?*

T Once I'd get the first two or three pages of each chapter out of the way, my pace would pick up. But getting over that initial hump kept taking me more and more time. It was like my engine just wouldn't heat up.

Ed Normally with a mangaka, we'll proceed from the draft to a rough sketch and then to the manuscript (final draft). Then we'll have a meeting, begin with the draft, move into the sketch, and so repeat the cycle. You wear different hats when working on a draft versus a manuscript, so breaking that process up can serve as a little change of pace. But in Tajima-sensei's case, as the go-ahead had already given to drafts for 20 chapters, we went straight from draft to manuscript, draft to manuscript.

Q *Did you have any assistants helping you?*

T No. I drew it all by myself.

Ed Adding an assistant can be somewhat difficult from an aesthetic perspective. On the other hand, having an assistant or one's family in your home can really give you a nice change of pace.

Q *It sounds like you secluded yourself in the mountains or something.*

T Exactly. Heh.

Q *Did you go anywhere to give yourself a little break?*

T Nowhere particularly far. Ah, I did read manga though.

Q *What did you read?*

T *Koe no Katachi* and the like. I was drawing a manga with a cute girl in it. So I thought it might be nice to read some manga with cute girls in them. I read a bit of *Nisekoi*, too.

Q *Change of pace? That sounds a bit like research to me.*

T Ah, no. I really did enjoy reading them. Haha.

Ed Perhaps thanks to all that built-up stress, the final two chapters were finished at top speed in about nine days.

Q *So you did finally find your pace?*

T I guess. I did? I don't remember.

Ed Eh?!

T Haha.

Ed Well, do it again, and it'll all come back to you. Anyway, every time we'd meet during publication the coloring of Tajima-sensei's face looked worse and worse. You really gave it your all.

Q *I would like to ask a few questions now about the content of the manga. Did you decide on the title yourself?*

T. I had already selected it during the initial drafting phase.

Ed Isn't it a splendid title? Among the many mangaka I've worked with, many struggle with titling their works. In such cases, the editing team will come up with something. But Tajima-sensei's choice was truly excellent. We took both the title and the various chapter subtitles directly from the drafts.

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Q *Had you settled on this title from the very start?*

T Actually, I actually decided on it at the very end. I kind of thought, "Well, no one will understand this thing anyway." Heh.

Q *How did you invent this story?*

T I already had "searching for a father" and "cult" as concepts and decided to orient them both around "love." I suppose the process was a bit like the impromptu manner rakugo performers sometimes ask their audience for three topics and then build a story around them.

Q *Why those three though? "Searching for a father" and "love" are easily understandable topics in developing but a manga, and there are certainly stories that focus on cults. But the combination of the three seems frankly somewhat peculiar. Why insert this final element?*

T I've had an interest in the subject for a while. The Tokyo sarin gas attack perpetrated by the cult known as Aum occurred during my youth, and I suppose the media I consumed relating to that may have left an influence on me. Remember, I studied film and media studies in college. My whole cohort had a great appreciation for the documentaries of Mori Tatsuya.

Q *Do you have an interest in documentaries seeking to spread awareness of social issues?*

Ed After Tajima-sensei's award-winning debut in 2009, a draft was developed about an accident at a nuclear power plant, but that never made it to the manuscript stage.

Q *Something dark and insightful?*

Ed No, it felt much like Tajima-sensei's current work. Very calm and gentle. Tajima-sensei even went so far as to visit Tokaimura, the site of the JCO criticality accident, for research purposes.

Q *You approached this work quite seriously.*

T When I left college, I felt like that was the kind of stuff I wanted to do. But, somewhere along the line, I ran into my own limits.

Ed In terms of what you can draw?

T Well, not quite.

Q *Which came first for Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai: The story or the characters?*

T I first decided on the pillars of the story ("searching for a father," "cult," and "love") and then created the characters. But I solidified those pillars while at the same time fleshing out the characters. So I consulted the characters with each step I took in developing the story.

Q *What do you precisely mean by "consulting with the characters"?*

T Well, I mean that as I worked, I might say, "Oh, no way would that character do this."

Q *Did you base your characters on real life models?*

T Not at all.

Ed I've been editing Tajima-sensei's work since the first short story. In terms of Minami and Aki-chan, I felt immediately, "Ah, these are Tajima Rettou's characters," in the sense that they were both a little bit flighty, a little bit gallant, and so forth.

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Q *The children characters in Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai are captivating*

T Ah, when it comes to the children, I did have some real life inspiration. My father is a plasterer, and I've at times helped him out. As a plasterer, you'll often visit other people's houses. And at one particular house, there was a kid who suddenly started quizzing me and saying things along the lines of, "Try taking my deadly punches!" and, "I'm level 530!!" Heh.

Q *Haruo! Then there's Jinko-chan. I'd never seen a manga character wriggle around on the ground the way she did. But when I reached that scene, it certainly felt like something a child would do.*

T Children will do weird things when they get embarrassed or raise their legs when they go to sleep.

Q *So you used your experience as a plasterer to help you create these characters. You seem to have worked all manner of jobs, Tajima-sensei.*

T I was a plasterer. I worked at a bookstore. I taught drawing at an art studio for about two months. Yeah, I've worn quite a few hats.

Q *And I suppose it must have been your father's work as a plasterer that provided the inspiration for "Magical Plastering Buffalo Girl Koteko."*

Ed There are so many little jokes like that.

Q *By the way, why was Johnny a horse?*

T Hmm. Let's see. Well, since I was writing about love, it kinda felt like I had to write something like that or I wouldn't be writing about love. How can I put this...? I don't know how to explain it well, but I wanted to leave a symbol to think about.

Q *Likening love to a wild horse is kind of incredible.*

T And since I wanted to make the title of chapter 18, "Johnny's Testament," the horse's name became Johnny. After serialization ended, I learned a bit about dream divination, and a horse can apparently symbolize passion, drive, or the successful realization of love. I didn't know any of that while I was developing the story, but I guess that kind of does make sense, huh?

Q *Did you draw Johnny with a pen?*

T I did.

Q *You didn't do anything digitally?*

T Not at all. I do everything by hand.

Q *Even your color work?*

T Yes. It's all watercolor.

Q *That's quite rare nowadays.*

Ed Tajima-sensei has a rather analog bent and doesn't even have an internet connection. Tajima-sensei's PC functions mostly as a DVD player.

Q *Why is that?*

T It's too much of a hassle. Haha.

Ed In terms of reader reactions, I have to collect responses from Twitter and print them out manually. Pictures are literally forwarded.

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Q *Aren't you concerned about how your readers react?*

T I deliberately try not to see their reactions. I'm frankly a bit scared about what I might find, so I never search for my name either.

Q *So when you're in the middle of working on something, you're working in radio silence?*

T Oh, no. I do listen to the radio. J-WAVE.

Q *There are quite a few regular radio listeners among mangaka. Do you have a particular affinity for J-WAVE?*

T Not really. But its reception is quite clear at my house.

Q *So it's a matter of sound waves and not content?*

T Since I'm using using the radio as background music while I work, if there's an unexpected noise, it'll drive me up the wall. Haha.

Q *I joked earlier that your process resembled secluding yourself on a mountain, but you do sound extremely focused while you draw.*

Ed During serialization, the process seemed to be a cycle of, "Draw, sleep, draw, sleep." Tajima-sensei's days and nights were reversed, and that reversal seemed to keep accelerating.

T I felt like sleeping would cause my art to get worse.

Q *What kind of manga did you read growing up?*

T *Chibi Maruko-chan*. No one would ever buy me any manga, so that was about it.

Q *Did you try redrawing any pages?*

T I most certainly did.

Q *So we might say that the first manga you ever drew was Chibi Maruko-chan?*

T Indeed. I drew an original story around my third year of elementary school.

Q *What was it like?*

T Maruko-chan's grandfather flew all the way into outer space... through the power of a fart. Haha.

Q *I can really feel the third-grader thoughts in that. On the other hand, it calls to mind some of your present-day scenes as well.*

T Then around the time I reached my fourth or fifth year of elementary school, the money I received at New Year's increased a bit, and I was able to buy more manga.

Q *So you wanted to be a mangaka even back then, huh?*

T But when I reached high school, reason took over. I thought, "No way can I do that." Haha.

Q *Reason was quick to win out, huh?*

T But in the depths of my heart, a flame still flickered. "Well, just maybe..."

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Q *And your interest in visual media started when you were in high school?*

T That's right. And I didn't read all that much manga. Though I was reading quite a few books.

Q *I've heard you say that you say that Kodomo wa Wakatte Agenai was partially conceived from Sakaguchi Ango's short story "Koi o Shiniku."*

T My grandfather on my mother's side used to buy me a lot of books to read.

Q *Judging from the chapter titles and the many little jokes you insert throughout the series, you must like movies quite a bit.*

T I watched them all the time as a college student.

Q *What's your favorite movie?*

T Lately, I've found *The Chef of South Polar* quite funny. It's a story about... well, nothing really happens. But it paints a really neat picture of daily life at the South Pole. You get to see them doing radio-led exercises and stuff like that.

Q *And when did you watch that?*

T After serialization finished, I rented myself about 60 movies to watch. That was one of them.

Ed How about books? Read anything good recently?

T I've been fixated on Morimi Tomihiko. Stuff like *The Tatami Galaxy*.

Ed Sounds like I'd like it.

Q *Have you been influenced by any particular mangaka?*

T As I've never worked as an anyone's assistant, not really.

Q *So you were completely self-taught, huh?*

Ed When Tajima-sensei's very first short story "Goaisatsu" was released, there were a few people who said that the atmosphere reminded them of Takano Fumiko.

T I do quite like Takano Fumiko. When I heard that story, I thought, "Maybe there was an unconscious influence," and I gave all my friends copies of Takano-sensei's manga. Haha.

Ed But I think it's fair to say that the "Tajima Rettau" style stands on its own now. Oh, I did give you a copy of Takano-sensei's new manga the other day. [Translator's Note: *Dormitory Tomkins*]

T And it was quite good.

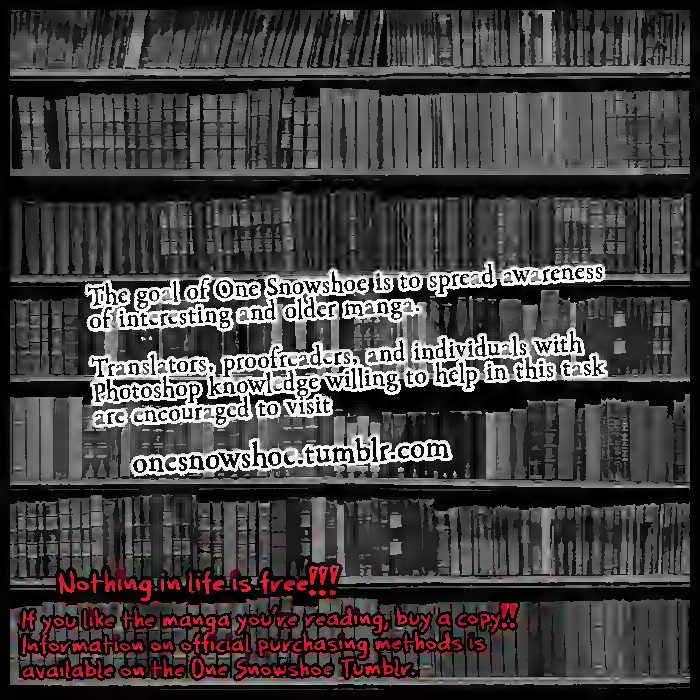
Q *Speaking of new works, is there any theme you'd like to work on next?*

T Nope.

Q *Oh my. Another quick reply.*

T When I drew an omikuji recently, the commerce section suggested I keep my concerns to myself. So my lips are sealed. Haha.

Q *Very well then. We'll be patiently awaiting your next work.*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